



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

AGENDA DATE: February 03, 2009

TO: Mayor and Councilmembers

FROM: Finance Department, Environmental Services Division

SUBJECT: Public Education Research Study For Foodscrap Recovery And Composting

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council authorize the Finance Director to execute a professional services agreement with Ideocore for an amount not to exceed \$45,750 for the implementation of a public education research study for the Foodscrap Recovery and Composting Program in the Business Sector.

DISCUSSION:

In March 2008, City Council approved a Solid Waste Action Plan (Action Plan), designed to focus and better coordinate staff efforts to implement the projects of the 2005 Solid Waste Strategic Plan. The Action Plan spells out an approach to maximizing diversion from landfill disposal for fiscal years 2008 through 2011. The Action Plan's top two priorities are Business Sector Recycling and the implementation of a Foodscrap Recovery and Composting Program in the Business Sector.

Foodscrap and compostable paper account for nearly 30,000 tons, or 30%, of all solid waste disposed by the City of Santa Barbara every year. When foodscrap, greenwaste and other organic material are buried in a landfill, they decompose anaerobically and become a substantial climate change contributor by producing methane (CH₄) and Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs). Landfills are the largest manmade source of methane, representing 34% of total methane generation in the United States. Methane is up to 72 times more effective at trapping heat in the earth's atmosphere than carbon dioxide (CO₂) when considered on a 20-year cycle, and thus a significant contributor to climate change. In contrast, composting produces only a fraction of greenhouse gases (GHGs) when compared to landfilling organic material. Composting is a cost-effective way to mitigate these impacts, while simultaneously producing a nutrient-rich amendment critical for healthy soils.

The City of Santa Barbara has taken substantial steps toward implementing a citywide composting program, beginning with the launch of a pilot Foodscrap Recovery and Composting Program in April 2007. The pilot has produced important operational data

and substantial community interest in the program. To date, over 600,000 pounds of foodscrap have been collected from 12 participants and composted at a certified commercial composting facility in Santa Maria. This program represents the first of its kind on the South Coast, and one of approximately fifty in the country.

In order to successfully launch a City-wide business foodscrap recovery program, staff determined that the assistance of a public opinion research firm was needed to conduct critical research to understand existing attitudes and perceptions related to recycling foodscrap. Such a firm could develop important insights as well as an outreach approach and guidelines for Environmental Services staff to employ an effective communication program for the Foodscrap Recovery and Composting Program in the Business Sector.

Selection Process

Staff identified twelve firms that could potentially provide the required services. These firms were then issued a Request for Qualifications, to which six responded. The six firms were evaluated based on several screening parameters, and the top four firms were formally interviewed.

Ideocore was selected because of several factors, including their broad experience with public opinion research and program launch. Their experience in these areas is both varied and extensive, and includes the development of award-winning public education campaigns for several local firms. Additionally, Ideocore was the only company interviewed with program launch capability. Because foodscrap recovery and composting is an entirely new concept for the Santa Barbara business sector, staff felt that a research firm like Ideocore would be essential for the program's success. Finally, Ideocore's attention to detail throughout the procurement process, coupled with their ability to provide the City with data at a high level of confidence, were critical factors in the decision-making process.

Scope of Work and Cost

The research will take place in four phases:

- Interviews with Opinion Leaders – Latino and General Community
- Restaurant Worker Research Module (Spanish-Speaking included)
- Public Opinion Survey – Business and Restaurant Leaders
- Overall Findings Report and General Messaging Recommendations

Ideocore will provide critical data and analysis – in both presentation and report form – to the City. This data will assist Environmental Services in the development of a successful foodscrap campaign in Santa Barbara, as well as provide additional

information to staff regarding perceptions and attitudes about recycling which can be used in development of future educational recycling projects.

The not-to-exceed fees for the services to be provided by Ideocore are \$45,750. This cost will be funded from existing appropriations designated for public education and outreach. In addition, pursuant to existing contracts, 80% of the costs will be reimbursed by the City's two franchised haulers.

BUDGET/FINANCIAL INFORMATION:

This project qualifies for the Hauler's Educational Fund, with each hauler paying 40% of the project cost and the Environmental Services Division paying 20% of the project cost, or \$9,150. Funds for this project have been budgeted for the current fiscal year.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT:

Recycling municipal solid waste and the City's related efforts to divert material from landfill disposal have considerable beneficial impacts to the environment. The US EPA has acknowledged and developed metrics that provide clear evidence of reduced greenhouse gas emissions through composting and recycling, which result in the creation of products using recycled feedstocks versus using virgin, natural resources. All of the activities of the Action Plan contribute to the City's goal of becoming a more sustainable community.

PREPARED BY: Stephen MacIntosh, Environmental Services Supervisor

SUBMITTED BY: Robert Peirson, Finance Director

APPROVED BY: City Administrator's Office